

SOUTHEASTERN CONNECTICUT COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

5 Connecticut Avenue, Norwich, Connecticut 06360
(860) 889-2324/Fax: (860) 889-1222/E-Mail: office@seccog.org

21 March 2014

Senator Joan Hartley, Co-Chair
Representative Stephen Dargan, Co-Chair
Public Safety and Security Committee
Room 3600, Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106

SUBJECT: Raised Bill No. 5533, An Act Concerning Workers' Compensation Coverage for Public Employees with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

Dear Senator Hartley and Representative Dargan:

The Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments wishes to express its opposition to Raised Bill No. 5533, An Act Concerning Workers' Compensation Coverage for Public Employees with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. This bill would increase the already large exposure that municipalities have to claims for Workers' Compensation by its public safety employees. While we understand that these employees are dedicated and can be personally involved in traumatic situations on an almost daily basis, opening up eligibility for Workers' Compensation to employees who in the course of their duties witness the occurrence of a traumatic event or are witnesses to the aftermath of a traumatic event, could result in claims that cost municipalities and their insurance carriers millions of dollars. Multiple personnel might be witness to an event, resulting in multiple claims for coverage for the same event. It would be extremely difficult to evaluate which claims are legitimate and which have been made because it was suggested that such a claim could prove successful in terms of receiving compensation. Although well intentioned, this bill raises too many questions about how often claims might be made, how much those claims will cost municipalities, and whether or not simply viewing a traumatic event in the course of one's duties should qualify an employee for a Workers' Compensation claim.

In addition to being applicable to municipal employees, we note that it also would apply to state public safety employees. This will have a fiscal impact on the State of Connecticut and its taxpayers as well as local taxpayers. We would respectfully suggest that a fiscal impact analysis of the proposed bill be performed and reviewed before this bill is considered for action.

Please do not approve of this bill which would do harm to the cities and towns of Connecticut. Thank you for this opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Kevin Lyden, Chairman
Salem First Selectman

Cc: Southeastern Connecticut Legislative Delegation (via email)